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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4024

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1348

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 001732

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FOR IIP/CTCC, JVAN DE VELDE
FOR EAP/PD, GMCOUGHLIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2032

TAGS: KISI SN

SUBJECT: REJECTING EXTREMISM: SINGAPORE MUSLIM "CREDIBLE VOICES"

REF: A. A. STATE 122288

- IB. B. SINGAPORE 1145
- IC. C. 06 SINGAPORE 373
- ID. D. 06 SINGAPORE 369
- IE. E. 05 SINGAPORE 3147
- IF. F. 05 SINGAPORE 3146
- IG. G. 05 SINGAPORE 1986
- IH. H. 05 SINGAPORE 1835

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia L. Herbold. Reasons 1.4(b)(d).

I1. (S/NF) A number of prominent Malay/Muslim Singaporeans speak out against extremism with "credible voices" and are identified below, per Ref A request. The Government of Singapore (GOS) strongly emphasizes the importance of preserving racial and religious harmony and has implemented various measures to encourage inter-faith dialogue and moderation through such measures as sponsoring "inter-racial confidence circles." At the same time, the GOS closely monitors developments in the Malay/Muslim community to prevent extremism from developing. The GOS strictly controls political expression and does not permit extremist or radical views to be aired publicly. For example, it has convicted non-Muslim Singaporeans under the Sedition Act for making derogatory comments about Muslims.

DR. YAACOB IBRAHIM

I2. (C) Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim is the Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs. His position makes him the most influential secular Muslim voice in Singapore. Dr. Ibrahim studied in the United States and has an extensive record of community service with several different Malay/Muslim organizations. His speeches are covered in detail by the government-controlled Singaporean media, both English- and Malay-speaking. He often speaks on the need for racial harmony and moderation in Islam, in line with GOS policy. Dr. Ibrahim has called upon Singapore's Muslim religious teachers (asatizah) to promote correct Islamic teachings and help their students to be good citizens in Singapore's multiracial, secular society. He often attends events with U.S. officials and hosts U.S. speakers and officials.

HAJI MOHAMMAD ALAMI MUSA

I3. (C) Haji Mohammad Alami Musa is the President of MUIS (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore), the government statutory board that guides government policy toward Muslim affairs. His is the most frequently voice heard in the Malay/Muslim community, promoting tolerance and moderation at

community events on a weekly basis. Mr. Musa's speeches are covered in detail by the Singaporean media. He promotes racial and religious harmony and moderation in Islam. After the recent arrest of a Singaporean Malay/Muslim who intended to join the Taliban (Ref B), Mr. Musa spoke on the need to take the terrorist threat seriously in Singapore. He announced the establishment of a new division within MUIS that will focus on youth engagement and correct Islamic teachings with the aim of counteracting radical ideologies. Mr. Musa often attends events with U.S. officials and at the Ambassador's Residence, and he and his staff receive U.S. Government visitors regularly at MUIS.

SYED FARID ALATAS

¶4. (C) Syed Farid Alatas is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Head of Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS). (His father, Syed Hussein Alatas, was also a prominent sociologist and a Fulbright Scholar.) Dr. Alatas speaks frequently on the need for Muslims to fight against extremist views within the ummah (worldwide Muslim community). He espouses a return to the Sufi cultural and intellectual tradition and seeks to eradicate extremist strains in all religions. Dr. Alatas regularly conducts seminars and workshops at NUS, local think-tanks, and Malay/Muslim community organizations in an effort to engage the Muslim public. Dr. Alatas is well respected in the Malay/Muslim communities of Malaysia and Singapore. He has no known record of advocating violence or criticizing U.S. policy, although he advocates that Muslims reject traditional Western sociological theories and create their own discourse. He has hosted U.S. speakers and participated in events with U.S. officials.

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SYED HASSAN BIN MOHAMED ALATTAS

¶5. (C) Syed Hassan bin Mohamed Alattas is the imam and head of Ba'alwie Mosque and a member of the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO). His great-grandfather was a famous religious teacher in Mecca. After Singapore's Mufti, he is probably the most respected Islamic scholar and teacher in Singapore. Imam Hassan encourages interfaith dialogue through the IRO, which promotes religious harmony and includes representatives from the nine major religions in Singapore. He writes articles for the English and Malay newspapers and delivers sermons every Friday at his mosque, which often hosts international visitors. His speeches and writings support dialogue and respect among faiths. Imam Hassan has attended events with U.S. officials, including an Iftar dinner at the Ambassador's Residence.

USTAZ NAZIRUDIN MOHD NASIR

¶6. (C) Ustaz Nazirudin Mohd Nasir is the Head of the Office of the Mufti and a member of the Fatwa Committee at MUIS. He was educated at Al-Azhar University and the University of London. Ustaz Nazirudin describes himself as "passionate" about promoting positive depictions of Islam and countering misinformation about jihad. He speaks fluent English, Malay, and Arabic. His name has been mentioned in discussions with other contacts as a possible future Mufti. To our knowledge, Ustaz Nazirudin has not participated in events with U.S. officials.